

generating the predictive image signal in accordance with motion compensation processing performed to the digital image signal; and

subjecting the predictive image signal to a padding process in which values of insignificant pixels are replaced with padding pixel values generated on a basis of the significant pixel values;

wherein said padding process comprises:

dividing a predictive image space formed by the predictive image signal into a first small image space comprising only pixels on odd-numbered pixel rows in the predictive image space and a second small image space comprising only pixels on even-numbered pixel rows in the predictive image space;

generating first padding pixel values from values of significant pixels in the first small image space and replacing values of insignificant pixels in the first small image space with the first padding pixel values; and

generating second padding pixel values from values of significant pixels in the second small image space and replacing values of insignificant pixels in the second small image space with the second padding pixel values.

36. An image decoding method in which motion compensation predictive coding is performed to a coding signal corresponding to a digital image signal forming an image space, including an image having an arbitrary shape and containing significant pixels and insignificant pixels, for generating a decoding signal of the digital image signal, said image decoding method comprising:

decoding the coding signal and generating difference information between the digital image signal and a corresponding predictive image signal;

generating the predictive image signal in accordance with motion compensation processing performed to the decoding signal of the digital image signal; and

subjecting the predictive image signal to a padding process in which values of insignificant pixels are replaced with padding pixel values generated on a basis of the significant pixel values;

wherein said padding process comprises:

dividing a predictive image space formed by the predictive image signal into a first

small image space comprising only pixels on odd-numbered pixel rows in the predictive image space and a second small image space comprising only pixels on even-numbered pixel rows in the predictive image space;

generating first padding pixel values from values of significant pixels in the first small image space and replacing values of insignificant pixels in the first small image space with the first padding pixel values; and

generating second padding pixel values from values of significant pixels in the second small image space and replacing values of insignificant pixels in the second small image space with the second padding pixel values.

37. A computer readable data recording medium containing a program operable to make a computer perform an image coding in which motion compensation predictive coding is performed to a digital image signal forming an image space including an image having an arbitrary shape and containing significant pixels and insignificant pixels, said computer readable data recording medium comprising:

a computer readable program code operable to cause the computer to code difference information between the digital image signal and a corresponding predictive image signal;

a computer readable program code operable to cause the computer to generate the predictive image signal in accordance with motion compensation processing performed to the digital image signal; and

a computer readable program code operable to cause the computer to subject the predictive image signal to a padding process in which values of insignificant pixels are replaced with padding pixel values generated on a basis of the significant pixel values;

wherein the padding process comprises:

dividing a predictive image space formed by the predictive image signal into a first small image space comprising only pixels on odd-numbered pixel rows in the predictive image space and a second small image space comprising only pixels on even-numbered pixel rows in the predictive image space;

generating first padding pixel values from values of significant pixels in the first small image space and replacing values of insignificant pixels in the first small image space with the first padding pixel values; and

generating second padding pixel values from values of significant pixels in the second small image space and replacing values of insignificant pixels in the second small image space with the second padding pixel values.

38. A computer readable data recording medium containing a program operable to make a computer perform image decoding in which motion compensation predictive coding is performed to a coding signal corresponding to a digital image signal forming an image space, including an image having an arbitrary shape and containing significant pixels and insignificant pixels, for generating a decoding signal of the digital image signal, said computer readable data recording medium comprising:

a computer readable program code operable to cause the computer to decode the coding signal and generate difference information between the digital image signal and a corresponding predictive image signal;

a computer readable program code operable to cause the computer to generate the predictive image signal in accordance with motion compensation processing performed to the decoding signal of the digital image signal; and

a computer readable program code operable to cause the computer to subject the predictive image signal to a padding process in which values of insignificant pixels are replaced with padding pixel values generated on a basis of the significant pixel values;

wherein the padding process comprises:

dividing a predictive image space formed by the predictive image signal into a first small image space comprising only pixels on odd-numbered pixel rows in the predictive image space and a second small image space comprising only pixels on even-numbered pixel rows in the predictive image space;

generating first padding pixel values from values of significant pixels in the first

small image space and replacing values of insignificant pixels in the first small image space with the first padding pixel values; and

generating second padding pixel values from values of significant pixels in the second small image space and replacing values of insignificant pixels in the second small image space with the second padding pixel values.